



**NO JUSTICE AND NO FREEDOM IN AMERICAN SOCIETY AND ITS SCHOOLS:
CAN CHURCHES ENABLE REVERSALS OF THESE TRENDS?**

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Abstract

Defining Justice in terms of equitable outcomes and Freedom as fair access to America's fountains of opportunity, we find that America has failed abjectly on both standards. Currently and historically, Justice has not reigned and Freedom has not rung in a normative sense for Blacks of any age during any period of time in America. We examine the origin and unfolding of this American travesty which we note has been problematic ongoingly for the leadership of secular and religious communities. To address this conundrum, we introduce our Justice and Freedom Theory and Praxis, bACED on more than 42 years of scholarship in Africana Studies, to answer this foundational question: What can be done to accelerate the achievement of Justice and Freedom in America? We answer this question by introducing and illustrating four critical components of our evolving theory and praxis: **A**cknowledging which details how problems of Justice and Freedom must be contextualized historically and currently; **C**ertifying which introduces normative standards that enable the achievement of Justice and Freedom; **E**mpowering which identifies the three types of leadership that must be trained in ways and means of enabling Justice and Freedom; and **D**issemination which identifies standards and procedures for sharing successful Justice and Freedom policies and practices. We then examine whether this theory of Justice and Freedom (*ACED*, pronounced 'aced') can inform the design and implementation of policies and practices that accelerate the attainment of Justice and Freedom in school and church settings. We compare the Justice and Freedom achieving performance of six applications that vary in the extent to which these reforms have 'aced' it.

Introduction: America's Problem with Justice and Freedom

Documentation

Failures in Justice. By justice we mean the achievement of racial equity, our standard here issuing from sacred as well as secular texts (Gen 1:27 and Declaration of Independence, 1776, respectively). For purposes of illustration, we consider the ratio of Black over White achievement proficiencies in reading and math. Where this ratio is 1.0 which would correspond to an equity estimate of 100%, we would say that Justice (Equity) has been achieved from the perspective of sacred and secular texts.¹

According to the 2018-2019 report of NAEP scores released by the National Center on Educational Statistics on 8th graders the Black over White equity ratio in reading is 35% ($15/42 \times 100$) in math and 22% ($7/32$) in reading, each falling dramatically short of our equity standard by 63 and 78 percentage points, respectively. Are we now heading in the right direction? The answer appears to be 'no'. Hanushek (2016), senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, estimates that if the Black-White achievement gap continues to close at the same rate it did over the period 1973-2013, it would be roughly two and a half centuries before this racial gap closes. In reading, Professor Hanushek predicts that if the achievement gap continues to close at the same rate it has over the period 1973-2013, it will take roughly one and a half centuries before this racial achievement gap closes. Can you imagine the irreputable harm to Black children and their communities if we waited this long to close achievement gaps?

¹ Although we have chosen for subsequent application an example from the field of education, the approach recommended here could apply to any metrical domain across racial, ethnic, sexual, socioeconomic, cultural, or religious groups in America and beyond.

Failures in Freedom. By freedom we mean fair and unfettered access to the nation's fountains of opportunity—educational, economic, and occupational being the most conventional markers.

Insert Figure 1 about here

We evaluate access percentages in Figure 1 against a cultural null of 60%, the valuation of each Black slave as stipulated for representation and taxation purposes in America's 1787 Constitutional Convention. Although the valuation here was for political and economic purposes, we believe that this three-fifths or 60% 'standard' may also approximate then and now the nation's unselfconscious appraisal of Black relative to White life in America. Currently, only Access Indicator 1 under Education exceeds this cultural null—the minimum cut point for assuring the nation we have pressed and shrugged our way beyond egregious and enduring political constructions of Black Other legislated nearly 331 years ago. Presently, however, our nation's attainment of fair and unfettered access is generally closer to the Cultural Null Line than it is to the Full Access Line. From these profiles of freedom delayed and denied, we conclude that our nation's fountains of opportunity remain deeply and sinfully colored—not sufficiently removed from 'colored only' or 'White only' signs once shamefully littering public places below the Mason-Dixie Line.

Logical Combinations. Here we examine four logical combinations of Justice and Freedom.

1. Both Justice (Equity) and Freedom (Access) prevail. This *Justice and Freedom Standard (JFS)* is fully consonant with biblical texts and founding documents. In our educational example, achievement gaps are eliminated *and* Blacks have fair and unfettered access to (a) the nation's educational, economic, and occupational fountains of opportunity and (b) public and private service sectors that enable physical, mental, familial, social, and environmental wellbeing. For JFS, then, Justice reigns and Freedom rings².

2. Justice (Equity) prevails without Freedom (Access). Behavioral economists routinely find that Blacks with identical educational histories, experience backgrounds, and prior performance ratings as Whites (Equity) are less likely to receive an initial interview, promotion consideration, or equal pay (Freedom). Case 3 *Justice Alone Standard (JAS)* affirms the familiar wisdom of Black parents: *You have to be twice as good to receive half as much*. For JAS, Justice reigns but Freedom does not ring.

3. Freedom (Access) prevails without Justice (Equity). Applications of this *Freedom Alone Standard (FAS)* have been challenged by local policies, national opinion, or court injunctions at state or federal levels. However supportable and desirable, affirmative action or preferential treatment policies and practices may enable access without compelling evidence of Justice attainment (Equity). For *FAS*, Freedom rings although Justice may not reign³.

4. This Neither Justice nor Freedom Standard (NJNFS) is more descriptive of life in America historically and currently than any prior set of combinations of Justice and Freedom.

² In evaluating the overall growth and development of nation states, we are in full agreement with the recommendation of Graham, Laffan, Pinto (2018) to include metrics of well-being. We expect national well-being will follow the ordered set (JFS>JAS>FAS >NJNFS) which would affirm our expectation that the well-being of a nation is determined by the level of Justice and Freedom served by that nation.

³ Adam Harris (2018), in his analysis of the latest court challenge at Harvard University, suggests that preferential admissions motivated by Affirmative Action policies may soon be coming to an end in America.

Under NJNFS neither Justice nor Freedom is served. This inaugural and continuing position of our nation is an egregious violation of the Genesis narrative (*God created man in his image...male and female created he them*, Genesis 1:27) and one of our nation's founding documents (*all men are created equal*, Declaration of Independence, 1776).

Insert Figure 2 about here

Figure 2 provides a theoretical summary of how JFS (#1), FAS (#2), JAS (#3), and NJNFS (#4) are likely to enable the recovery and transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities. In general, we expect that level of transformation will correspond to the ordered set (JFS>JAS>FAS >NJNFS). But where does our nation's default position NJNFS come from?

Origin

The historical and contemporary default position of our nation issues from cumulative denials of Justice and Freedom sustained by formal and informal political, social, and cultural policies and practices: 123 years of The Maafa which we estimate covered the period of kidnapping, incarcerating, shipping, and selling Africans at ports of designation followed immediately by 246 years of chattel slavery, and 151 years of Black Codes and Jim Crow. And for 401 years, from first 'arrival' (1619) to this moment (2020), Blacks have been exposed continuously to and victimized by racist stereotyping and racial discrimination. By our reckoning, then, from The Maafa to current times, Blacks in America have been exposed to and

harmed by more than 917 oppression years (123 + 246 + 151 + 246 + 401). Although these considerations might be helpful in accounting for why America previously and currently remains in default (NJNFS) by sacred and secular standards (Tillotson, 2011), does this oppression history really matter? Is it consequential?

Insert Figure 3 about here

Based on millions of participants who have taken the racial implicit attitudes test through online centers located at Harvard, Washington, other universities, and from their own homes or work sites in America, *nearly 80 percent of White and nearly 50 percent of Black adults identify with pro-White and anti-Black attitudes*—even among those self-identifying as political activists or bias free (Banaji, & Greenwald, 2013; Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010; & Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Taylor & Kouyaté, 2013). Published studies show that American, Caribbean, and African Blacks who internalize these stereotypes are at higher risks of obesity, metabolic dysfunctions, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes along with elevated levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and hostility linked to problematic styles of coping—denial, avoidance, fatalism, escapism, and addictive behaviors (Tull & Chambers, 2001; Tull, Sheu, Butler, *et. al.*, 2005; Tull, Wickramasuriya, Taylor, *et al.*, 1999).

From research findings in America, Blacks who identify with these stereotypes report lower educational, income, and occupational attainment (Murrell, 1989), and they commit more serious Black-on-Black crimes (Terrell & Taylor, 1980), consume more alcohol (Taylor &

Jackson, 1990), report more depressive and anxious symptoms (Taylor, Henderson, & Jackson, 1991) as well as more marital dissatisfaction (Taylor, 1990) and troubled relationships with other Blacks (Taylor & Rogers, 1993). Finally, we note from a large-scale national study of communities where explicit White racist attitudes abound that Blacks *and* Whites have elevated death rates due to circulatory diseases (Leitner, Hehman, Ayduk, *et al.*, 2016). It would appear, then, that racist attitudes whether internalized by Blacks or Whites or by Blacks and Whites carry negative consequences for the sanctity of life Black and White (*cf.* Spanierman & Hepner, 2004).

We conclude that our national history formatively underlying ambient and internalized expressions of racial stereotypes are consequential for the mental, physical, social, familial, and educational health of Blacks on the Continent and in the African Diaspora and for perpetrators of racist ideology as well. In general, denying another's humanity is consequential for victim as well as perpetrator.

Methods: Proposed Remedy—Africana Justice and Freedom Theory and Praxis

Over more than 42 years at the University of Pittsburgh, Black Studies as it was called originally and Africana Studies as it is named now has attracted scholars from the discipline itself along with scholars from the humanities, education, nursing, public health, social sciences, and natural sciences. Over the last 42 years, these scholarly traditions, under the leadership of Africana Studies, have contributed in unique, exciting, and complementary ways to what we now refer to as Freedom and Justice theory and praxis driven by four complementary components, each directed toward enabling Justice (equity in outcomes) and Freedom (fair

access to opportunity and service structures or systems that enable life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) even in unjust and unfair places. Four constructs underlie our theory for attaining Justice and Freedom: Acknowledging, Certifying, Empowering, and Dissemination.

Acknowledging: Utilizing personal, local, state, national, and global costs of racism or other forms of oppression along with identifying rewards and advantages linked to reductions in racism and other forms of oppression to mobilize and sustain the drive toward Justice (Equitable Outcomes) and Freedom (Fair Access to the nation's fountains of opportunity). Our study of the rise or fall of local, national, and international social movements led us to the following conclusion: movements stressing social costs of injustice but not social rewards of justice or movements stressing social rewards of justice but not social costs of injustice were less successful than movements which stressed both the social rewards of justice and social costs of injustice. Movements consistent with this conclusion tended to be more sustainable and effective over time.

Certifying: Enabling theoretically grounded and empirically supported policies and practices that accelerate movement toward Justice and Freedom. On the theoretical side, we have found that five norms accelerate the attainment of Justice and Freedom: (1) Worldview—belief that *I am my brother's and sister's keeper*; (2) Addaptive—capacity to succeed under difficult circumstances; (3) Values—identification with seven core values (Love and Respect, Interpersonal Skills, Learning Orientation, Self-Confidence, Self-Persistence, Self-Esteem, and Self-Reliance); (4) Emanicipation--rejection of racist, sexist, classist or other forms of oppression; and (5) Spirituality—hopeful, grounded, and transformed. We have found that instructional policies and practices that are WAVES Compliant accelerate closures and reversals of racial and

socioeconomic achievement gaps in reading, math, and science in schools located in poor predominately Black neighborhoods and communities (Taylor, Kyere, and King, 2018).

Empowering: Training and certifying reputational, positional, and decisional leaders in how to enable and sustain gap-closing policies and practices over the short-run and long-haul. First is the challenge of identifying types of leadership needed to initiate and sustain the drive toward Justice and Freedom. From our study of social movements local to international, we have concluded that three leadership types are necessary: decisional, positional, and reputational. Decisional leaders hold or control the purse needed to sustain drives toward Justice and Freedom. School administrators with board and staff support must be at the table for educational reform. Positional leaders who hold social or political offices with recognized standing and influence must be at the table. Reputational leaders, recognized grassroots leaders who have lived with negative implications of failed achievement, must also be at the table. After selecting decisional, positional, and reputational leaders, we *strongly* recommend their initial training and certification in policies and practices that accelerate the achievement of Justice and Freedom. This training should (a) introduce metrics which provide ongoing indication of how well adapted policies and practices are accelerating closures and reversals of achievement gaps; (b) introduce policies and practices with prior record of accelerating achievement gap closures in reading, math, and science; (c) identify how the quality of gap-closing policies and practices will be monitored ongoingly; (d) specify plans for improving the quality with which gap-closing policies and practices are implemented; (e) identify and report on relationship between (c) and (d) and gap-closing indicators; and (e) convene annual meeting

where (a) through (d) are reported along with planned revisions for enhancing the attainment of Justice and Freedom the subsequent year.

Disseminating: Designing a virtual community of users to support initial and ongoing monitoring of (a) the timeliness with which Justice and Freedom enabling policies and practices are implemented; (b) the quality with which Justice and Freedom enabling policies and practices are implemented; and (c) teacher responsiveness to recommended online resources or expert advisement designed to improve quality of implementation where indicated.

Finally, when components *ACED* are implemented at a high level (75 percent or higher), we say we have '*aced*' it, that is, we have put in motion policies and practices that enable Justice and Freedom even in unjust and unfair places. Figure 4 provides an overview of how our theory enables Justice and Freedom even in unjust and unfair places.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Results: Application of Africana Theory and Praxis to Six Educational Reforms

Based on our review of educational reforms, we identified two common dimensions which organized our review and evaluation. In the first, we asked who initiated the reform and in the second who supported the reform? Of course we were unable to provide an exhaustive review of all reforms answering to these two questions, but we did want to provide an engaging sample of reforms answering to both questions that were committed in their mission and

operational statements to the goal of equity in student outcomes. We did lean, however, in the direction of oversampling cases where the church community was involved as initiator, supporter, or both. Using *ACED* as our standard for evaluating each reform's potential for achieving standards of Justice and Freedom, we now share our results in relation to the following six cases:

1. *Nationally Initiated, State Supported*. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is the largest organization of State Executive Officers for American states and territories. CCSSO informs and trains executive officers on policies and practices stipulated by our government and/or valued by the profession. It is not unreasonable to assume that this high-end examination and national adoption of policies and procedures recommended by CCSSO would be consequential in accelerating the attainment of performance equity for Blacks. McCann (2020) found, however, that on measures including nationally standardized tests and correlated indicators of educational success that (a) none of the states reported racial performance equity and (b) racial performance disparities between the best and worse states was approximately four fold. Although well intentioned and financed, CCSSO has not delivered racial Justice and Freedom in our nation's states and territories. From the perspective of *ACED*, it has not systematically and ongoingly provided qualitative and quantitative data on the costs of injustice and unfairness and the rewards of Justice and Freedom for neighborhoods, communities, the state and nation as well as the world. This failure in Acknowledging is coupled with failures in Certifying—identifying and implementing policies and practices that accelerate movements toward Justice and Freedom. McCann's (2020) data is a portrait of abject failure of policies and practices

promoted nationally by CCSSO. On the dimension of Empowering, the record here is often quite remarkable. CCSSO typically works with decisional leaders (superintendents and board members) who invite positional leaders (social, civic, and faith-based organizations) along with reputational leaders (grass-root organizations) to the table for discussion, modification, or additions to the plan of action which in the best of outcomes is supported by all parties. Missing, however, is the initial and ongoing training and certification of each leadership type in methods for launching, monitoring, and adjusting chosen policies and practices that accelerate closures of racial achievement gaps in racially and economically challenged neighborhoods and communities. Finally, utilization of virtual community technologies which provide immediate feedback on quality of implementation, ongoing assistance in improving quality of implementation ongoingly, and feedback on how quality of implementation impacts quality of outcome are missing—all reflecting Disseminating shortfalls. In summary, only our Empowering component approaches our standard for achieving and sustaining Justice and Freedom in unjust and unfair places. These shortfalls we suggest may in part underlie failures of CCSSO to deliver Justice and Freedom to economically disadvantaged and advantaged Black students.

2. *Nationally Initiated, Church Supported.* Nationally there are about 5,000 community schools with 25,000 being projected by year 2025 (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020). From our review of formal assessments which feature the wholistic infusion of mental, social, physical, and cultural health services for students, peers, and families. These schools, which often feature popular restorative practices and positive behavioral interventions, have generally failed to accelerate racial and socioeconomic gap closures in the primary

disciplines of reading, math, and science (*e.g.* Johnston, Engberg, Opper, *et al.*, 2020). We note in this application that Acknowledging is problematic because costs and rewards of Justice and Freedom are not systematically and routinely utilized to quicken and sustain the drive toward closure of racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps. Because recent and earlier evidence fails to indicate accelerated closure of achievement gaps, this indicates a problem in Certifying. This initiative, a popular choice of faith-bACED leaders locally and nationally, has been especially successful in bringing decisional, positional, and reputational leaders to the table. However, this initiative would not receive a high score on Empowering because it fails to meet our standard for training, certification, and ongoing involvement of certificants in monitoring and evaluation. Finally, this initiative fails to meet our Disseminating standard which would require enablement of a virtual learning community to measure implementation quality and treatment outcomes ongoingly. These identified weaknesses may help to explain why this popular model confirmed by faith-bACED communities have failed to deliver Justice and Freedom in unjust and unfair places.

3. *Church Initiated, District Supported.* In the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Rev. Dr. Monroe, Pastor of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, formed with the support of the Pittsburgh Presbytery the Hill District Education Committee. Its mission, to close racial achievement gaps in this predominately Black economically challenged community, was published broadly to community leaders and citizens Black and White. Those invited to participate on this committee included a broad range of decisional, positional, and reputational leaders who were invited to the conference table to ponder ways and means of closing racial achievement gaps which were historically and currently among the worse in

the city of Pittsburgh and in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Speakers from multiple disciplines, including the senior author, were invited to the table to present and discuss promising policies and practices that could eliminate racial achievement gaps in the primary disciplines of reading, math, and science. Thus far, then, this initiative would receive high marks on Empowering since (a) decisional, positional, and reputational leaders were at the table and (b) all leadership types were involved in the initial selection and ongoing monitoring of policies and practices designed to accelerate the closure of racial achievement gaps in reading, math, and science. At every meeting of this committee which met once monthly or more often as needed, Acknowledging the costs of academic inequity or rewards of academic equity were examined through graphs, narratives, or testimonies. Certifying was informed by a series of public lectures also attended by members of our committee and leadership of the Pittsburgh school district. Featured in these lectures were principals from across the nation whose predominately Black low-income schools had actually, for five consecutive years, reversed racial achievement gaps in the disciplines of math and reading. With the assistance of local and national grants, the senior author was able to bring these principals to Pittsburgh who, through prior arrangement with Pittsburgh's Superintendent Dr. Linda Lane, agreed to mentor three of the four Hill District School principals⁴ Our networking local principals and teachers with Dame-Dame Schools that have nearly closed or actually reversed racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps in predominately Black low-income settings. Two-year exposure to Dame-Dame principals in three Hill District Schools was associated with (a) accelerated reading and math scores

⁴ One of the four principals elected not to participate in this training with Dame-Dame principals.

within these schools; (b) rates of acceleration undocumented in the history of these schools; (c) proficiency growth in these schools that exceeded almost all other schools in the district with similar demographics; (d) gains in reading and math achievement that exceeded gains for Black and White students across the district. In the one Hill District School that chose not to participate in this initiative, there were no appreciable achievement gains. But even here, in this school, one student enrolled in our digital math intervention was one of six national winners for diligence and progress which was acknowledged with a \$1,500 check presented in a public assembly at the school which the principal was unable to attend. On reflection, we do not regret this experience which demonstrated the resiliency of our overall model even in a setting where it was neither sought nor welcomed. On our final requirement Disseminating, we primarily used in this application face-to-face interactions and paper documentations which we plan to upgrade in future applications with high-end virtual community technologies.

4. *Church Initiated, District Supported.* In the predominately Black economically challenged neighborhood of Homewood in Pittsburgh, school superintendent Mark Roosevelt agreed to collaborate with Pastor Reverend Doctor Eugene Downing of the Sixth Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in a joint project to accelerate closures of racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps in math proficiencies and STEM technologies. For elementary school students participating in the Apangea digital math program funded by the school district, we found at the end of the first year that (a) the percent below basic decreACED by 54 points, (b) the percent basic decreACED by 5 points, (c) the percent proficient increACED by 37 points, and (d) the percent advanced increACED by 12 points.

Eight of the students participating in an engineering robotics program, designed by Carnegie Mellon University and funded by a grant secured by the senior author, were invited to participate in a workshop in the Robotics Lab at Hampton University. These eight students, as reported by the *New Pittsburgh Courier* (2008) “not only built and programmed robots—starting with a box of parts and a manual—but did so while politely refusing all assistance from their college supervisors. Not only did the group complete the assignment—which staff said incoming freshmen are not expected to finish—one of them found and corrected an error in the assembly manual that, if not corrected, would have made building working robots impossible”. In relation to our theory, we were clear from the beginning in identifying costs associated with educational inequities and rewards linked to educational equities (Acknowledging); in clarifying prior evidence supporting the accelerative impact of interventions selected (Certifying); in identifying decisional, positional, and reputational leaders who met regularly and provided support to the participating school by inviting principal and teachers to a morning service and subsequent reception where they were recognized for their service (Empowering); and providing ongoing visits and support to the school where the senior author met with the principal Dr. Regina Holley. Dissemination included paper and pencil implementation metrics rather than high-end virtual community technologies we now recommend.

5. *Church Initiated, Community Supported*. The normalization of Values for Life in the primarily Black economically challenged McKelvey Elementary School located in the Hill District which was introduced under item 3. Values for Life were previously identified as one of five norms that enable Justice and Freedom: Love and Respect, Interpersonal Skills, Learning

Orientation, Self-Confidence, Self-Persistence, Self-Esteem, and Self-Reliance. These values—based on interviews with parents, grandparents, teachers, seminarians, and entrepreneurs—were commonly affirmed as critically important to the positive development of the community’s children. In Table 2 these values, identified previously as the V component of *WAVES*, are compellingly related to each of the remaining components of *WAVES*.

Insert Table 2 about here

From our general theory for enabling Justice and Freedom, we conclude from Table 2 that our *Certifying* standard has been satisfied. In this regard, we are deeply appreciative of the support of Acting Superintendent Dr. Andrew King who funded the development of elementary and secondary curriculum for Values for Life and to Superintendent Linda Lane who supported the implementation of Values for Life in the Hill District community.

Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. McLemore, then Pastor of the historic Bethel AME Church, we affirmed our *Empowering* standard by developing a 40+ member Cultural Policy Council to oversee the implementation and evaluation of Values for life in the neighborhood school (McKelvey Elementary School whose Principal was Dr. Annette Jordan and the surrounding neighborhood (Lower Hill District of Pittsburgh whose City Councilman was Sala Udin). Members of our Cultural Policy Council attended monthly meetings involving instruction which included *Acknowledging* activities along with updates on *Certifying* priorities and plans. Additionally, Council recruited more than 60 businesses,

churches, agencies, and grass-root organizations that agreed to post pictures of students whose behaviors exemplified each value prioritized in the school. Parents were notified of these postings and invited to bring family, friends, and neighbors to stop past and autograph these pictures in support of their children. Additionally, participating churches agreed to celebrate by inviting and recognizing these students during morning worship and a regional advertising company agreed to post names of these students on a large billboard at a major intersection within the community. *Disseminating* activities included monthly instruction, monitoring, and evaluation although without the high-end virtual community technology which is now a priority for future development. How well, then, did our appropriation of *ACED* accelerate the closure of racial achievement gaps in this economically challenged community?

We found that teacher ratings of the behavioral expression of Values for Life are associated with performance on standardized measures of reading and math achievement. On the math section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, we found that 2nd and 3rd grade students rated at or above the median on Self-Persistence, Self-Esteem, or Self-Reliance were 5 to 8 times more likely to score at or above the 50th percentile relative to students rated below the median on the behavioral expression of these values. On the reading component of the Stanford Achievement Test 9, students rated at or above the median on Love and Respect, Interpersonal Skills, Learning Orientation, or Self-Confidence were about 6 times more likely to report improvements from Fall to Spring assessments. There were modest to appreciable increases on most standardized measures of reading and math achievement through 4th grade. For all grades, attendance went up, tardiness went down,

and in-school suspensions were lower than the previous two years. An anthropologist conducting qualitative interviews on a random sample of students found that although students felt their neighborhoods were unsafe, they perceived their school as safe and their principal and teachers as caring. It would appear we 'aced' it especially for the first four of five grades at McKelvey (Taylor and Kouyatè, 2003).

We note finally our implementation and evaluation of digital math (Think Through Math) and engineering robotics (Carnegie Mellon Robotics Institute) programs implemented by trained and certified instructors in after-school church and secular settings. Both programs were implemented and evaluated over a period of three months during the year 2012, For both programs, we evaluated three-month pre-to-post intervention changes for grades 6 to 8 and found that math proficiencies increased by 40 percent at AME Zion's Wesley Center, by 45 percent at the Hill House Association, and by 33 percent at Grace Memorial Presbyterian's Schenley Heights Center 30 percent at University Prep Middle School and that engineering robotic proficiencies increased by 57 percent at AME Zion's Wesley Center, 29 percent at the Hill House Association, and 62 percent at Grace Memorial Presbyterian's Schenley Heights Center. University Prep Middle School did not participate in this engineering robotics initiative.

6. *Church Initiated, Church Supported.* The senior author, who chaired the Education Commission at Sixth Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Missionary Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, made the case with the support of Deacon Board Chair Roy Elder and our church fellowship to (a) cultivate student commitment to academic excellence, (b) challenge typical barriers to academic excellence; and (c) encourage academic excellence in their immediate

neighborhoods and communities. We now examine our approach to items (a) through (c)⁵.

From a biblical perspective, we explore with youth and their parents or guardians why math and science are important subjects in God’s plan for responsible stewardship over His creation (Genesis 1: 3-29):

- Physics and Mathematics (Genesis 3a: Let there be light). Every introductory book in physics has a chapter on light. Einstein’s theory of relativity is bACED on fundamental properties of light, and advanced mathematics is used to express properties and functions of light.
- Oceanography, Geology, Geography, and Cartography (Genesis 1:6: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters).
- Horticulture, Herpetology, and Silviculture (Genesis 1:11: Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb and the fruit tree).
- Astronomy, Celestial Mechanics, and Theoretical Physics including String Theory (Genesis 1:14-15: Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and let them be signs and seasons, and for days and years, and let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on earth).
- Ichthyology, Aquaculture, and Ornithology. (Genesis 1:20: Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens).

⁵ It is important to note here that at the time of this development, the host church was without pastor whom we would regard within this context as a decisional leader. The absence of decisional leadership is the primary reason this application never got off the ground. We acknowledge, however, the encouraging and helpful input of Rev. Dr. Richard Wingfield, pastor of Braddock Borough’s Unity Baptist Church in Allegheny County. He reviewed and provided input on biblical texts utilized in this initiative.

- Zoology, Entomology, Herpetology, Agriculture, Veterinary Science, and Animal Husbandry (Genesis 1:24: Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth).

From a biblical perspective we note obstacles Jesus faced that often are similar to but typically unacknowledged by Black youth, parents, and guardians, and then we identify results of Jesus's overcoming these obstacles.

- Obstacles Encountered: Jesus was born poor (2 Cor. 8:9). At birth he was laid in a feeding trough for animals (Lk. 2:7). He came from a large family that included at least seven children (Matt. 13:55-56). His family moved at least four times within a period of two years during his early years (Matt. 2:11, 16, 23). It is likely that his father died sometimes after he was 12 years of age (have you noticed there is no mention of Jesus' father after that age?). He was raised in a city with a bad reputation—Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (John. 1:46). Some of his ancestors had a history of crime—murder, adultery, prostitution, and incest (Matt 1:1-17).
- Obstacles Overcome: Jesus was tri-lingual—he spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. He was bi-dialectal—he spoke in the language of the streets and in the vernacular of the high court. He was numerate—trained as a carpenter, he was able to build houses and bridges that required substantial proficiencies in math and science.

Week 1 kick-off would feature a Sunday evening 6:30 PM vesper service of songs and sermon or lecture that examine 'how' and 'why' academic achievement is important to the current and future lives of our youth. Weeks 2-11 scheduled for Saturdays involve students in

biblically grounded instruction which will inform their development of skits, poetry, hip-hop, plays and other artistic products to be organized and produced professionally for sharing with a community-wide audience of pre-teens, teens, and adults during Week 11. During Week 12, students present summaries with performance segments to a public decision maker of their choice—administrative and political leaders—who will be asked (a) how these products and insights might inform policies, practices, or programs under their control and (b) whether they plan to pursue implementation of these policies and practices in their areas of responsibility. We expect that this outreach strategy, which engages leaders, children, and adults in neighborhoods where they live, will affirm the grand expectation in John 6:1-12: Five loaves and three fishes supplied by youth were blessed by Jesus to feed a hungry crowd of 5,000 male and female children and adults. We believe our youth also can be a blessing to their communities.

Certificate training for this initiative would be considered high on Acknowledging since the rewards of equity and the costs of inequity are identified. Certifying elements are strong for allocentric worldview (*W*), mature adaptivity (*A*), all values (*V*), mature cultural identity (*E*), and spiritual integration (*S*). Empowering potential is high since decisional, positional, and reputational leaders are fully involved at different points in our intervention cycle. Dissemination at the moment is the weakest component of *ACED* because our virtual community technology is not yet available. Although this initiative is well grounded theoretically, we have not yet had opportunity and resources to implement and evaluate it. We offer it here as a unique *Church Initiated, Church Supported* example not dependent on public sources of funding that could be used independently or in combination with Cases 3, 4, and 5.

Discussion: Enabling Justice and Freedom under Church Leadership

The church has supported or initiated five of the six models reviewed. We used Case 1 as our comparison standard as it utilized nationally initiated and state supported approaches to educational reform. Disappointingly, this model failed to close achievement gaps in the primary disciplines. We next introduced a service-oriented model in Case 2 which is strongly and widely supported by an increasingly wide range of faith-based communities. The record of gap closure is disappointing here well. Cases 3, 4, and 5, all involving church-initiated reforms that were *WAVES* Compliant, accelerated gap closures in reading, math, and science in predominately Black economically challenged communities. In our last application, Case 6, we explored whether a church initiated and supported application might contribute to accelerated gap closures in primary disciplines of reading, math, and science. Although we structured this model to be *WAVES* compliant, we do not have corroborating data on the validity of our proposed application. We nonetheless offer it as a consideration for churches without immediate resources to implement models identified in Cases 3, 4, and 5. Alternatively, this model also could be used as a supplement for all Cases 1-5. Basically, we argue that the church is not without option in the face of historical and ongoing educational disparities that contribute to the default position of our nation—No Justice, No Freedom (Table 2).

An immediate question arises on whether churches are ready to provide leadership in enabling Justice and Freedom in predominately Black economically challenged neighborhoods and communities. In a Barna (2019) survey, 33 percent of White and 15 percent of Black practicing Christians believed that there's nothing the church can do to rectify 400+ years of Black oppression in America. Encouragingly, 67 percent of White and 85 percent of Black

practicing Christians think the church can do something. Unfortunately, the modal selection of reform supported by churches fails to deliver on Justice and Freedom (Case 2). Although denominations surveyed were limited to American Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ, we would add to this Catholic, Islamic, Pentecostal, National Baptist, AME Zion, Seventh Day Adventists, and United Methodist churches that also partnered with us in implementing reforms described under Cases 3, 4, and 5. Together, these churches also might be interested in implementing recommendations described under Case 6 which directly accommodates the second Great Commission of the church: teaching them in the observance of all things. We conclude, then, that there may be broad interdenominational interest in expanding the missionary thrust of church fellowships that would include locally enabling educational Justice and Freedom even in unjust and unfair places.

We identify three caveats learned over the years that may be of value to churches choosing to seek Justice and Freedom in their neighborhoods and communities. First, there are no shortcuts. Our data indicate that successful implementation requires uncompromised adherence to each component of our model—Acknowledging, Certifying, Empowering, and Dissemination. Only when we have ‘aced’ it can we expect Justice and Freedom even in unjust and unfair environments. Second, start with what’s realistic for your environment. If immediate resources are not available, for example, consider starting with the model described under Case 6. Should you choose to select another model, complete all the organizational and resourcing steps required to align human and financial resources needed to implement it. Third, plan for the long haul. We have been blessed over the years with national, state, county, municipal, and foundation resources to discover ways and means of moving America out of its default

condition of No Justice and No Freedom. The most confident resolution of this challenge over the long haul is to establish permanent favor and relationships with public funding streams—district, municipal, county, or state—to launch and support the drive ongoingly toward Justice and Freedom in your area of application. This has been a hard lesson which even now we have not yet learned to master confidently and completely. But set this as your goal at the outset.

Finally, we note based on Figure 4 that movement toward Justice and Freedom within the educational domain is associated also with reductions in (a) chronic diseases; (b) emotional distress; (c) social disorders; (d) problematic coping; and (e) social class disparities—occupational, educational, and economic. Is it possible, then, that church-directed reforms of the type we have profiled will help to:

- propel schools as well as the nation toward a Case 1 affirmation of Justice *and* Freedom (Figure 2)?
- normalize the development of ecumenical and interracial coalitions dedicated to enabling policies and practices that promote Justice and Freedom?
- attract the interest of those who have fallen away from or who have never seriously considered formal membership in a church fellowship?
- normalize pathways toward Justice and Freedom now demanded by local and national protests?
- improve the reputation of the church universal—local, national, and international?
- provide rationale for expanding the content of theological courses in missiology?

Finally, we note the documented success of trained and certified church fellowships in accelerating outside referrals or supportive ministries to members or neighbors of churches serving high-risk neighborhoods and communities (Fapohunda and Taylor, 2014)⁶.

Would it also be possible, with appropriate training and certification of church leadership, to diminish disparities in *physical health* (acute and chronic diseases); *social health* (teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and violent crimes); *family health* (family formation, family relationships); *economic health* (income and wealth production); and *environmental health* (physical, chemical, and biological toxins)? Might such results help unsettle 400+ years of default—No Justice, No Freedom—now characterizing our nation and its schools and communities? Might this transition provide an effective witness to Generations X, Y, and Z whose members often routinely and rightfully question the effectiveness of religious communities in enabling Justice and Freedom—foundational aspirations of sacred and secular texts?



⁶ We acknowledge here the leadership of Rev. Dr. J. Van Alfred Winsett, former pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, whose leadership was critical in bringing to the table more than 30 religious leaders from Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic traditions for training and certification.

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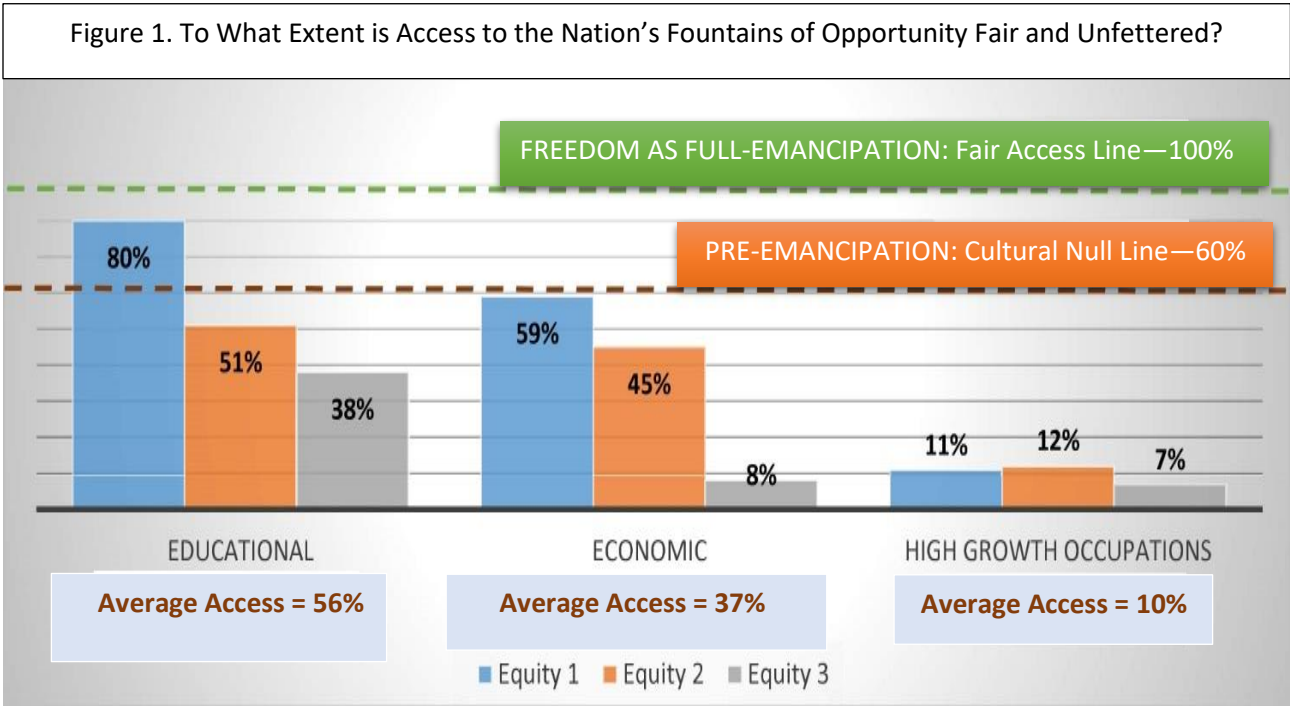
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Exhibits



1 High School Graduation:

Black rate is 80 percent of the White rate.

2 Bachelor’s Degrees:

Black rate is 51 percent of the White rate.

3 Master’s or higher Degrees:

Black rate is 38 percent of the White rate.

1 Income:

Black income is 59 percent of White income.

2 Family Intergenerational Mobility:

Black children of middle-class parents are 45 percent as likely as children of White parents to have incomes greater than their parents.

3 Net Worth:

Black net worth is about 8 percent of White net worth.

1 Computer Occupations:

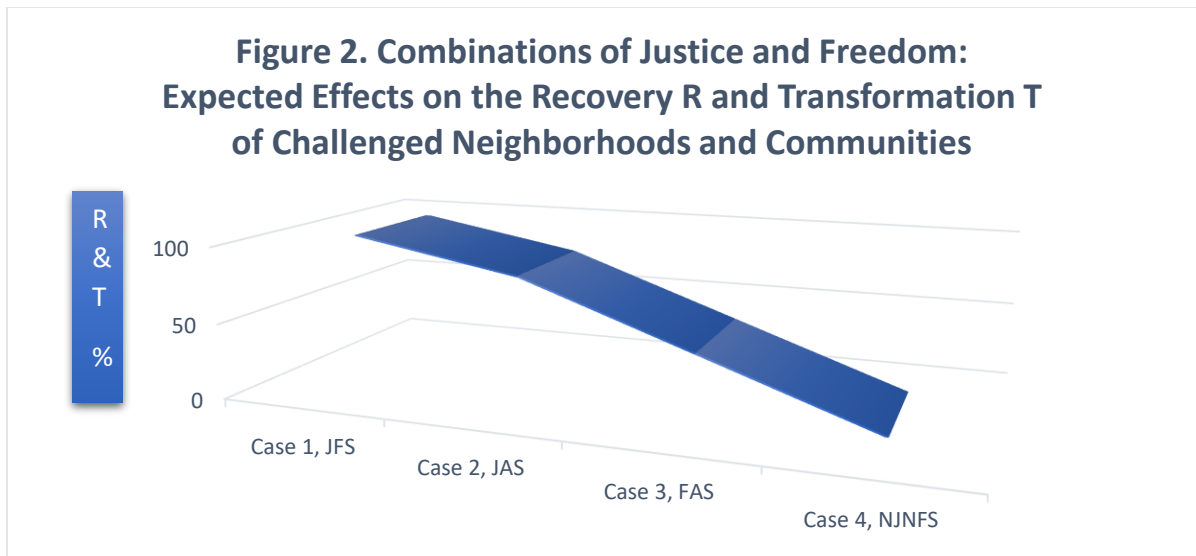
Black participation is 11 percent of White participation.

2 Mathematical Occupations:

Black participation is 12 percent of White participation.

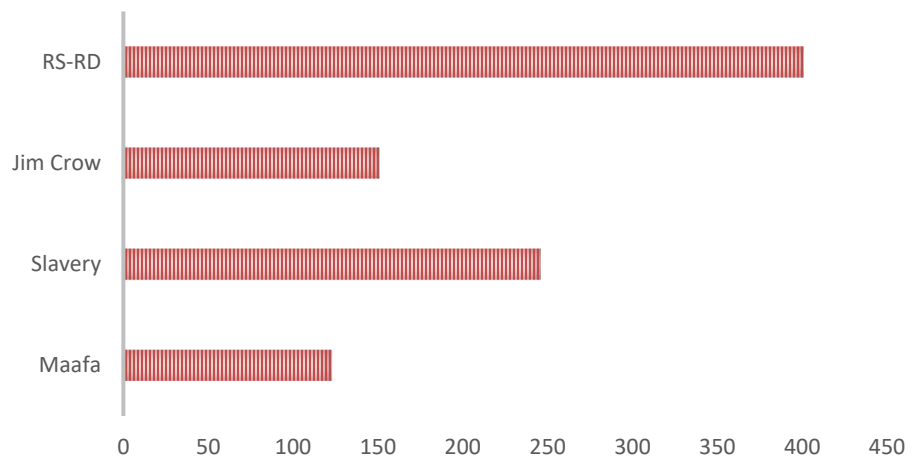
3 Engineering Occupations:

Black participation is 7 percent of White participation.



Expected linkages between Cases (1 Justice and Freedom Standard; 2 Justice Alone Standard; 3 Freedom Alone Standard; and 4 Neither Justice Nor Freedom Standard) and policies and practices that enable the recovery and transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities.

FIGURE 2. BLACK LIFE IN AMERICA FROM 1619 TO 2020: ESTIMATED YEARS OF EXPOSURE TO UNJUST ENVIRONMENTS



| | Maafa | Slavery | Jim Crow | RS-RD |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|-------|
| ■ Number of Oppression Years 917: | 123 | 246 | 151 | 401 |

These 917 oppression years are direct and indirect sources of former and current wide-ranging disparities now characterizing Black life in America—the human costs of America’s default position (NJNFS) which can be attenuated and reversed by policies and practices that enable Justice and Freedom (JFS) even in unjust and unfair places.

**Figure 4. Africana Theory of Justice and Freedom:
The Role of ACED (Pronounced 'aced')**

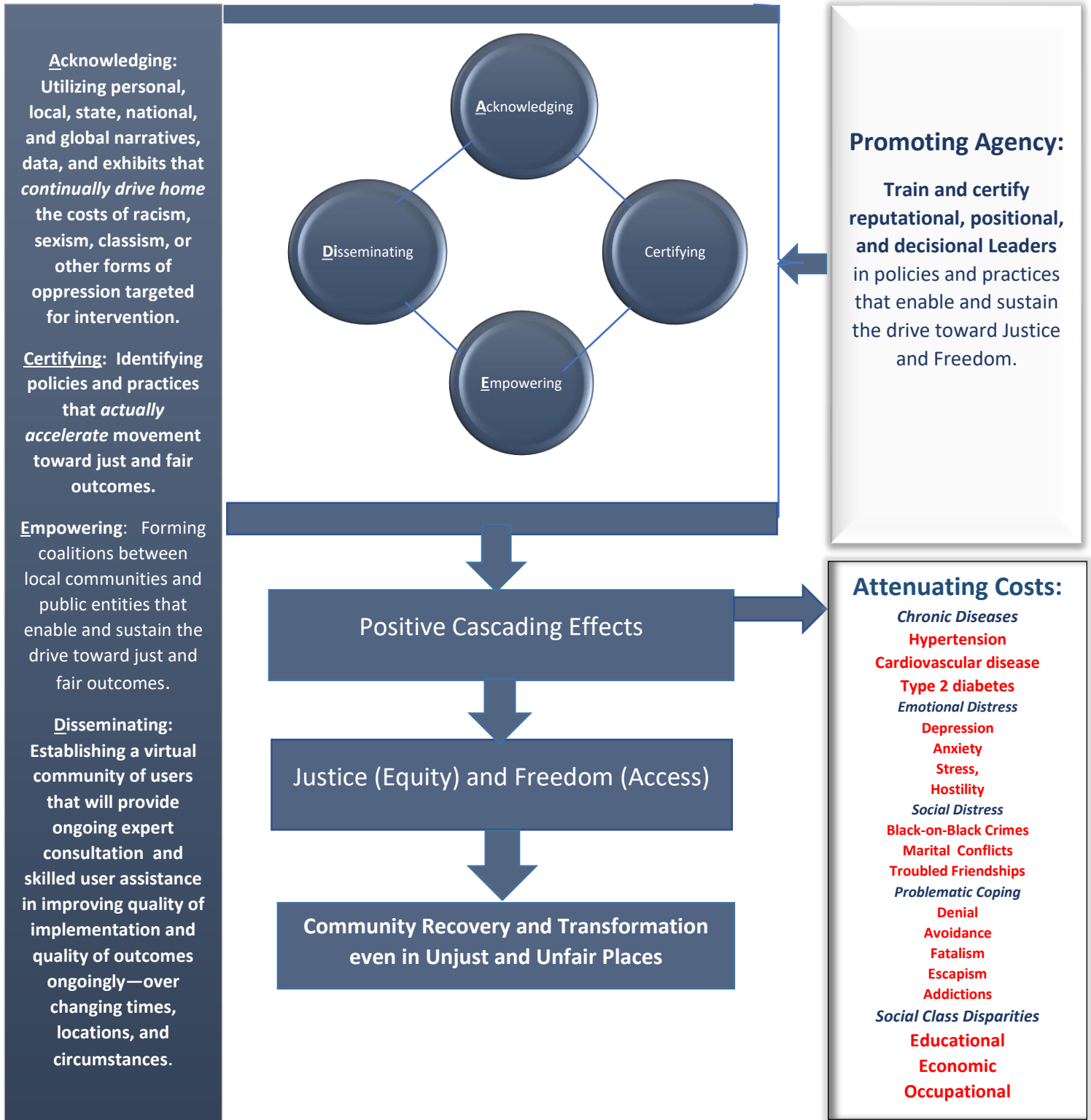


Table 1. Justice and Freedom:
Logical Combinations

| Freedom (Fair Access)? | Justice (Equitable Outcome)? | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| YES | 1 | 2 |
| NO | 3 | 4 |

Freedom: Do racial, socioeconomic, or gender groups have fair and unfettered access to the nation's opportunity structures?

Equity: Have racial or socioeconomic or gender inequities been eliminated?

Table 2

Relationship Between Values for Life V and Remaining Components of WAES

| Values V | Residual Components WAES | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| | Worldview | Adaptivity | Emancipation | Spirituality |
| Love and Respect | Expresses special regard for those older and carries sense of responsibility for those younger | Goes to the aid of those in distress | Avoids racist, classist, or sexist teasing or joking | Expresses and receives constructive love |
| Interpersonal Skills | Sensitive to feelings of others | Exercises self-discipline, patience, and control in managing conflicts | Rejects ideas that blacks are intellectually, emotionally, or morally inferior | Seeks and considers constructive counsel |
| Learning Orientation | Asks questions | Sees connections between different areas of learning | Is savvy, creative, inventive | Enjoys helping others learn |
| Self-Confidence | Eager to explore new places, meet new people | Daring in constructive ways | Attentive and enthusiastic when new challenges are introduced | Excited and upbeat about living |
| Self-Persistence | Seeks out challenging or difficult tasks | Sticks with task until it's finished, even when the going is frustrating or rough | Has surprisingly long attention span | Bounces back from frustrations |
| Self-Esteem | Deals with positive as well as negative aspects of self and others | Maintains cool in face of teasing | Expresses pleasure in his or her own accomplishments | Expresses pleasure in accomplishments of others |
| Self-Reliance | Stands up for what's fair | Avoids physically and emotionally hazardous situations | Resists temptation to mischief | Able to think and act alone if necessary |